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MANUFACTURING AND TRADE INVENTORIES AND SALES **March 2004**

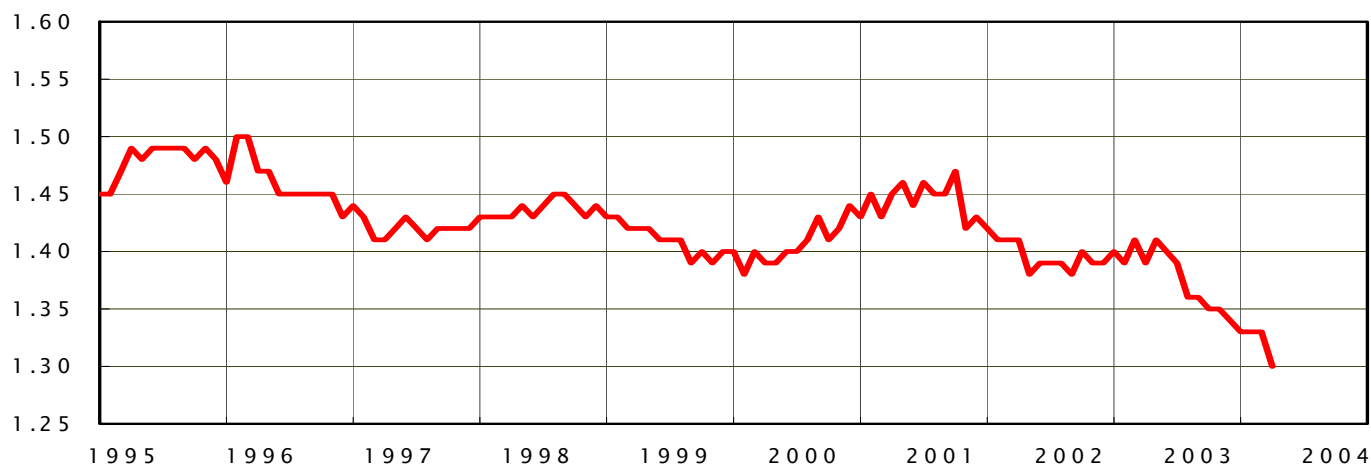
Sales. The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that the combined value of distributive trade sales and manufacturers' shipments for March, adjusted for seasonal and trading-day differences but not for price changes, were estimated at \$928.7 billion, up 2.9 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$) from February and up 9.7 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$) from March 2003.

Inventories. Manufacturers' and trade inventories adjusted for seasonal variations but not for price changes, were estimated at an end-of-month level of \$1,205.2 billion, up 0.7 percent ($\pm 0.2\%$) from February and up 2.6 percent ($\pm 0.4\%$) from March 2003.

Inventories/Sales Ratio. The total business inventories/sales ratio based on seasonally adjusted data at the end of March was 1.30. The March 2003 ratio was 1.39.

Total Business Inventories/Sales Ratios: 1995 to 2004

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday and trading-day differences but not for price changes)



The Manufacturing and Trade Inventories and Sales Report for April is scheduled for release June 15, 2004 at 8:30 a.m. Questions concerning this report may be addressed to: Scott Scheleur (301) 763-2713 (Retail), Chris Savage (301) 763-4834 (Manufacturing), or Nancy Piesto (301) 763-2747 (Wholesale). Electronic inquiries may be sent to: retail.trade@census.gov.

The wholesale and manufacturing data in this report also appear in the following monthly Census Bureau publications: Current Industrial Reports (see M3 series for manufacturers data) and Current Business Reports (see BW series for merchant wholesalers). Retail data are available on the Census website at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>. March data was released May 4 for Manufacturers and May 7 for merchant wholesalers. The data are also available the day of issue on the Internet-<http://www.census.gov/bussales> - and on Department of Commerce's STAT-USA website; for information, call (202) 482-1986.

Table 1. Estimated Monthly Sales and Inventories for Manufacturers, Retailers, and Merchant Wholesalers
(In millions of dollars)

	Sales			Inventories ¹			Inventories/Sales Ratios		
	Mar. 2004	Feb. 2004	Mar. 2003	Mar. 2004	Feb. 2004	Mar. 2003	Mar. 2004	Feb. 2004	Mar. 2003
	(p)	(r)	(s)	(p)	(r)	(s)			
Adjusted									
Total business.....	928,730	902,285	846,826	1,205,244	1,197,124	1,175,129	1.30	1.33	1.39
Manufacturers ³	361,302	348,157	330,764	444,264	442,798	445,180	1.23	1.27	1.35
Retailers.....	301,215	295,019	278,335	459,397	454,614	439,466	1.53	1.54	1.58
Merchant wholesalers.....	266,213	259,109	237,727	301,583	299,712	290,483	1.13	1.16	1.22
Not Adjusted									
Total business.....	981,782	846,079	864,597	1,212,408	1,199,685	1,178,892	1.23	1.42	1.36
Manufacturers ³	388,973	339,222	347,472	443,131	445,854	442,829	1.14	1.31	1.27
Retailers.....	303,316	266,449	274,312	465,081	451,296	443,872	1.53	1.69	1.62
Merchant wholesalers.....	289,493	240,408	242,813	304,196	302,535	292,191	1.05	1.26	1.20

See footnotes and notes at the end of Table 3.

(p) Preliminary.

(r) Revised.

(s) Adjusted data were revised due to concurrent seasonal adjustment. No revisions were made to Not Adjusted data.

Table 2. Percent Changes for Sales and Inventories — Manufacturers, Retailers, and Merchant Wholesalers

	Adjusted						Not Adjusted					
	Sales			Inventories			Sales			Inventories		
	Mar. 04/ Feb. 04	Feb. 04/ Jan. 04	Mar. 04/ Mar. 03	Mar. 04/ Feb. 04	Feb. 04/ Jan. 04	Mar. 04/ Mar. 03	Mar. 04/ Feb. 04	Feb. 04/ Jan. 04	Mar. 04/ Mar. 03	Mar. 04/ Feb. 04	Feb. 04/ Jan. 04	Mar. 04/ Mar. 03
Total business.....	2.9	0.9	9.7	0.7	0.8	2.6	16.0	2.9	13.6	1.1	1.5	2.8
Manufacturers.....	3.8	-0.1	9.2	0.3	0.6	-0.2	14.7	6.5	11.9	-0.6	1.9	0.1
Retailers.....	2.1	0.9	8.2	1.1	0.7	4.5	13.8	0.5	10.6	3.1	1.7	4.8
Merchant wholesalers..	2.7	2.1	12.0	0.6	1.2	3.8	20.4	0.6	19.2	0.5	0.7	4.1

Table 3. Estimated Monthly Retail Sales, Inventories, and Inventories/Sales Ratios, By Kind of Business
(In millions of dollars)

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Sales			Inventories ¹			Percent Change In Inventories			Inventories/Sales Ratios		
		Mar. 2004 (p)	Feb. 2004 (r)	Mar. 2003 (s)	Mar. 2004 (p)	Feb. 2004 (r)	Mar. 2003 (s)	Mar. 04/ Feb. 04	Feb. 04/ Jan. 04	Mar. 04/ Mar. 03	Mar. 04	Feb. 04	Mar. 03
	Adjusted ²												
	Retail trade, total.....	301,215	295,019	278,335	459,397	454,614	439,466	1.1	0.7	4.5	1.53	1.54	1.58
	Total (excl. motor veh. & parts).....	223,032	218,640	205,792	301,669	299,815	292,671	0.6	0.4	3.1	1.35	1.37	1.42
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers.....	78,183	76,379	72,543	157,728	154,799	146,795	1.9	1.4	7.4	2.02	2.03	2.02
442,3	Furniture,home furn., elect. & appl. stores..	17,099	16,898	15,361	27,388	26,960	25,147	1.6	-0.1	8.9	1.60	1.60	1.64
444	Building materials, garden equip & supplies..	31,367	28,266	25,983	48,803	48,384	44,165	0.9	1.1	10.5	1.56	1.71	1.70
445	Food & beverage stores.....	43,387	43,068	41,802	34,716	34,622	34,654	0.3	-0.3	0.2	0.80	0.80	0.83
448	Clothing & clothing access. stores.....	15,943	15,816	14,508	37,429	37,372	37,531	0.2	0.5	-0.3	2.35	2.36	2.59
452	General merchandise stores.....	41,553	41,380	38,731	68,667	68,064	66,607	0.9	0.6	3.1	1.65	1.64	1.72
4521	Dept. strs. (excl. leased depts.).....	17,974	18,162	17,750	37,436	37,363	38,693	0.2	-0.3	-3.2	2.08	2.06	2.18
	Not Adjusted												
	Retail trade, total.....	303,316	266,449	274,312	465,081	451,296	443,872	3.1	1.7	4.8	1.53	1.69	1.62
	Total (excl. motor veh. & parts).....	218,170	195,884	198,509	299,272	291,005	289,856	2.8	1.2	3.2	1.37	1.49	1.46
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers.....	85,146	70,565	75,803	165,809	160,291	154,016	3.4	2.6	7.7	1.95	2.27	2.03
442,3	Furniture,home furn., elect. & appl. stores..	16,571	15,361	14,695	26,621	25,639	24,468	3.8	-2.2	8.8	1.61	1.67	1.67
444	Building materials, garden equip & supplies..	30,853	22,351	24,272	51,243	49,061	46,285	4.4	4.7	10.7	1.66	2.20	1.91
445	Food & beverage stores.....	42,625	39,940	41,130	34,532	34,213	34,471	0.9	-1.7	0.2	0.81	0.86	0.84
448	Clothing & clothing access. stores.....	14,694	13,344	13,399	36,680	35,541	36,743	3.2	3.8	-0.2	2.50	2.66	2.74
452	General merchandise stores.....	38,773	36,355	36,432	66,906	64,124	64,836	4.3	2.3	3.2	1.73	1.76	1.78
4521	Dept. strs. (excl. leased depts.).....	16,373	15,104	16,390	36,425	34,897	37,648	4.4	2.1	-3.2	2.22	2.31	2.30

(p) Preliminary (r) Revised (s) Adjusted data were revised due to concurrent seasonal adjustment. No revisions were made to Not Adjusted data.

¹ Inventories are on a non-LIFO basis as of the end of the month.

² Adjusted for seasonal variations and, in the case of sales, for trading-day differences and holiday variations. Concurrent seasonal adjustment is being used to adjust all sales, shipment and inventory estimates. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-12-ARIMA program. The factors derived from the program are applied to the current and previous month estimates and for retail and wholesale estimates a year ago as well. For retail sales, concurrent seasonal adjustment is also used to adjust the advance estimates (published one month before the preliminary estimates) and the estimates one year before the advance month. This explains the revision to retail estimates from a year ago.

³ Manufacturers sales refer to the value of shipments by manufacturers. The shipments data from individual manufacturers are adjusted prior to tabulation for the number of trading days as well as for any variations in the length of the reporting period.

Note: U.S. and group totals include kinds of business not shown. The Manufacturing and Trade Inventory and Sales estimates are based on data from three surveys: the Monthly Retail Trade Survey, the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey, and the Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories, and Orders Survey. The sampling variability for retailers and merchant wholesalers can be used to construct a 90 percent confidence interval for the estimates. Over all possible samples, 90 percent of such intervals will cover the true estimate. These intervals are given in parentheses for the estimates on the front page. If, for example, the estimate is up 0.8 percent and the margin of sampling error is ± 1.2 percent, the 90 percent confidence interval is -0.4 percent to +2.0 percent. If the range contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. Measures of reliability for Retail and Wholesale sales and inventory levels and changes are included in the detailed monthly press releases for those industries. Manufacturers do not contribute to estimates of sampling variability because the manufacturer's mail panel is not a probability sample from a known frame and standard errors of the industry estimates cannot be calculated. Estimates from all three surveys are also subject to nonsampling errors, which can arise in any stage of the survey. Such errors include coverage error (failure to accurately represent all population units in the sample) response errors, coding errors, and nonresponse. Although no direct measurement of these errors has been obtained, precautionary steps were taken in all phases of the collection, processing, and tabulation of the data to minimize their influence.